R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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THE GIFTED CHILD IN CONNECTICUT, A SURVEY OF PROGRAMS.

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TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY GIFTED STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT, A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT TO EACH SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS IN NOVEMBER 1966. AREAS OF STUDY INCLUDED THE EXISTENCE OF PROGRAMS, IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES, TEACHER SELECTION CRITERIA, AND INSERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS AND OTHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROGRAMS. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE RESULTS INDICATE THAT (1) OF THE RESPONDING SCHOOL SYSTEMS, 42 PERCENT HAD SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED, (2) TOTAL PROGRAMING FOR ALL GIFTED IN ALL AREAS AT ALL LEVELS WAS INFREQUENT, (3) FOUR OR MORE CRITERIA WERE USED BY 86 PERCENT OF THE DISTRICTS FOR IDENTIFICATION, AND (4) INSERVICE EDUCATION NEEDS DEVELOPMENT. EIGHT QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE SURVEY AND IN NEED OF FURTHER STUDY ARE LISTED. (JF)

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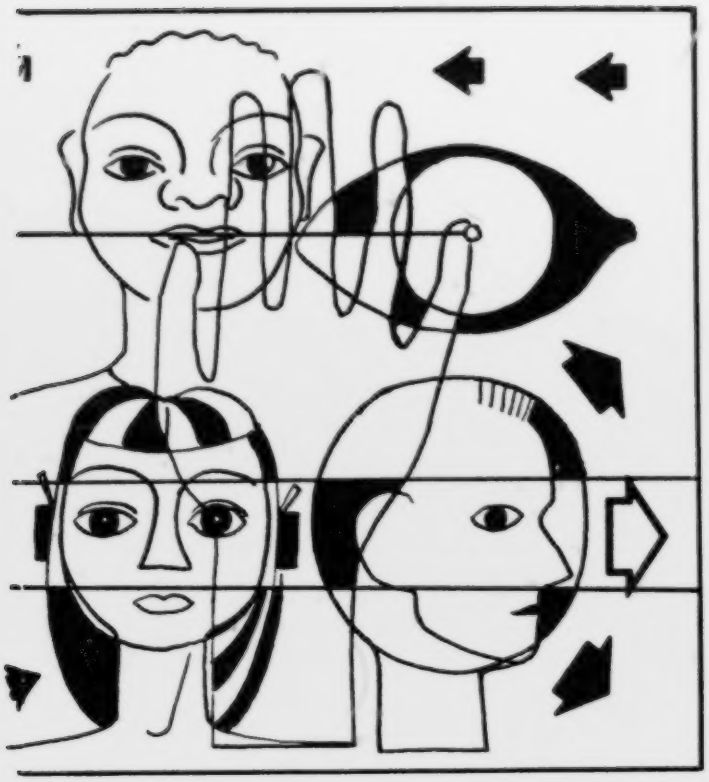

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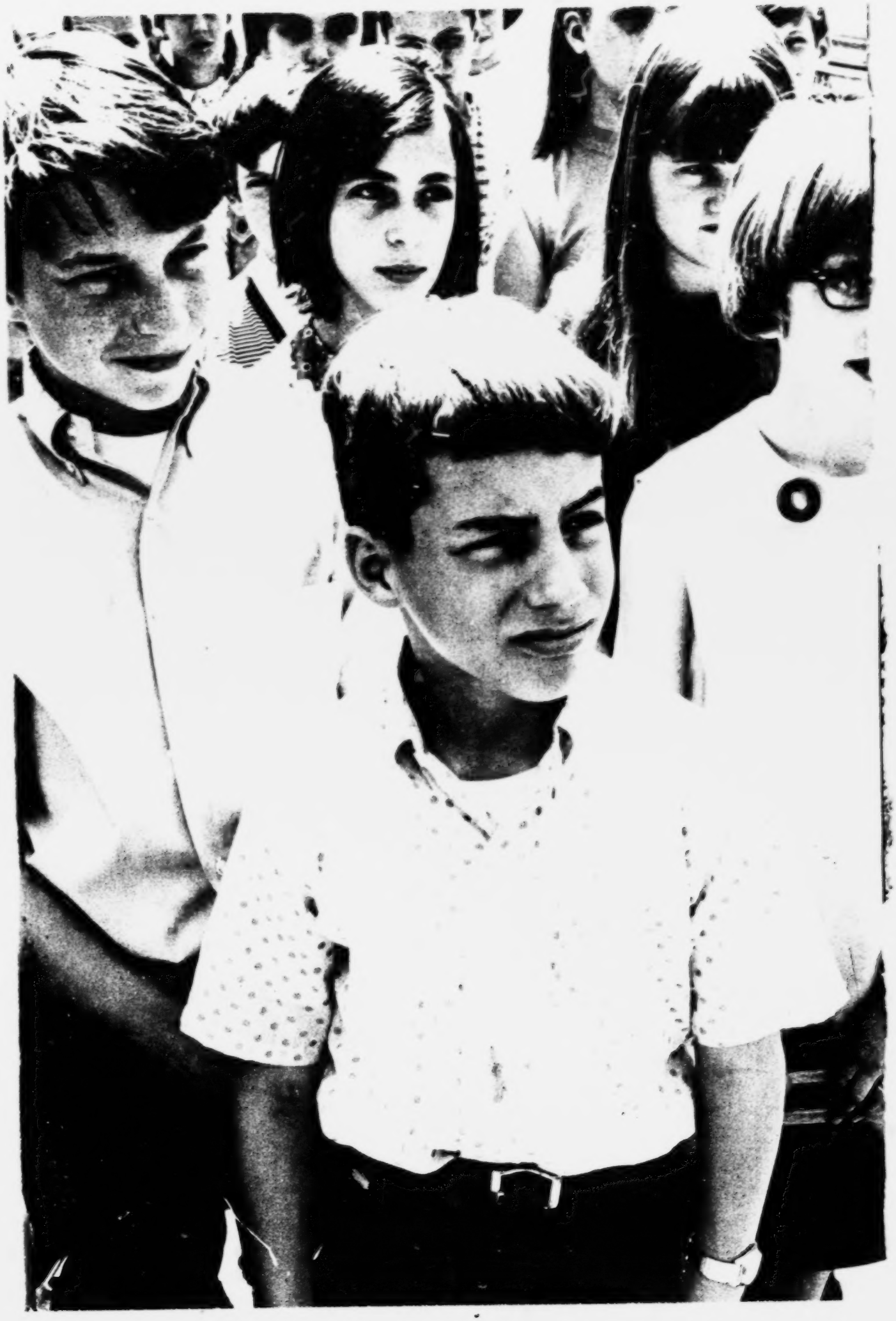

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The Gifted Child In Connecticut

A Survey of Programs

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Foreword

Gifted and talented pupils have special needs. Their unique abilities must be developed, and they must learn that because of their gifts they are charged with an extraordinary burden of responsibility for leadership — a burden they must accept willingly and with grace. The public schools must recognize their duty to such pupils early in their career and provide an encouraging climate and suitable programs.

Approaches are many and varied. This first study is an attempt to show where we are at this time. It is designed to serve as a benchmark from which we hope to progress through experimentation and planning to the vigorous implementation of more and more effective programming for the specially endowed.

The report reveals that more is being done for these pupils than is perhaps generally recognized. But more importantly, it reveals how much more must be done. We must be fully committed in our schools to the care and nurture of these people from whom we may hope for so much.

William J. Sanders
Commissioner of Education

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COVER—Our cover illustration was drawn by Robert J. Saunders, Consultant in Art Education, Connecticut State Department of Education. Dr. Saunders explains the drawing as follows: "Through the use of visual symbols, the cover represents the learning cycle between all students and subject matter, as students use their senses to study and communicate knowledge. The basic areas and media of learning represented in the illustration are essential to the total education of the gifted child, as well as all children."

Introduction

The purpose of this survey was to determine the extent and nature of special provisions for gifted students throughout the State of Connecticut. Differential provisions for the gifted are considered to be an essential part of any total school program that respects the time-honored educational principle of equal opportunity for all youth to develop their potential abilities to the fullest. If a democratic society truly recognizes this principle — and the principle of individual differences among its members — then it should be satisfied with nothing less than an educational system that will provide differential qualities of experience for students with vastly divergent degrees of learning potential.

How well have the school systems in Connecticut responded to the challenge of providing an equal opportunity for all students to pursue an education that is best fitted to their needs and capacities? The report here presented attempts to answer this question, and by so doing, it is hoped that all educational personnel within the state will become more sensitive to the possibilities that exist for special programming for the gifted.

The findings contained herein are considered to be a useful source of information for persons who are responsible for makng decisions regarding the future of education for the gifted in Connecticut. School districts may find the information to be useful in comparing their own local efforts with statewide developments. The findings might cause colleges and universities to consider their offerings in the area of preparation of teachers and leadership personnel for the gifted. And the State Department of Education can use the information to focus its efforts on the twofold task of stimulating the development of new programs and providing consultative services aimed at expanding and improving existing programs.

Design of The Survey

In November, 1966, the Bureau of Pupil Personnel and Special Educational Services of the State Department of Education sent to each superintendent of schools a questionnaire entitled "A Survey of Programs for the Gifted in Connecticut." The inquiry was designed to gather information relating to each of the following general areas:

- The existence of special educational programs.
- The nature and extent of special provisions for the gifted at the elementary and secondary levels.
- The criteria and procedures used in identifying gifted pupils.
- The criteria used in selecting teachers for the gifted.
- The existence and nature of special in-service training programs for teachers of the gifted.
- The person or persons who are administratively responsible for gifted student programs.

One hundred twenty-one school districts replied to the questionnaire. Of this total, 51 districts reported the existence of a "program" for the gifted. Several respondents indicated that they were in the process of planning and/or initiating differential programs. While many districts reported no special programs for the gifted per se, almost all districts reported group testing programs and many indicated that homogeneous grouping procedures were being used in one or more subject matter areas.

In some instances, school districts without special programs replied with such comments as: "Each teacher takes care of her own gifted pupils"; "We provide enrichment in the regular classroom"; and "We consider all of our students to be worthy of special attention."

Certain limitations are inherent in a survey of this type. First, the data are based solely on the 1966-67 school year and are limited to the school districts that responded to the questionnaire. Secondly, the use of a single question-

—Educational Technology

naire to gather information from school districts of varying sizes and resources in some instances forced replies to questions that may have been incongruous with the type of programs in operation in certain cities and towns. In this regard, the respondents were most cooperative in supplying the necessary qualifying statements that added to the interpretive value of the findings. Finally, the survey is selective to some extent in the information that it seeks.

The data that follow are considered to be the most important elements of a statewide survey that is aimed at gathering general facts about district-wide programs for the gifted. Subsequent studies may focus attention on different or additional information and may investigate the problem more intensively by pursuing a school-by-school rather than district-by-district approach.

Whenever possible, the information gathered in the survey is presented in the form of charts and graphs. Accompanying text is for the purpose of pointing out significant facts revealed by the illustrations and to indicate findings that were not readily quantifiable.

The Problem of Definition

The basic problem in the area of education for the gifted is that of defining the population of students for whom special provisions will be made. How one defines the "gifted" or the "talented," or the "academically able" is a major factor in determining the procedures that will be used in the actual process of identification.

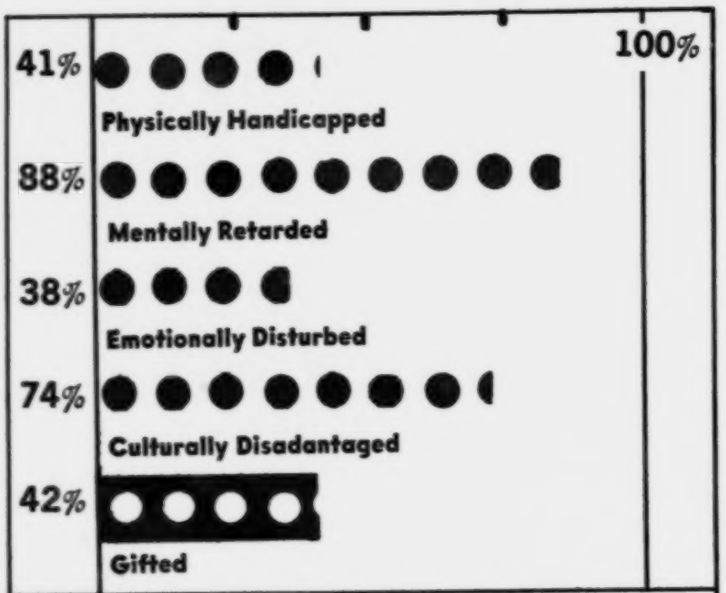
The literature in this area offers a plethora of definitions and characteristics which attempt to describe that quality known as "giftedness." It is clear that educators and psychologists are far from agreement on a unitary meaning at the present time. For this reason, no single definition of giftedness was prescribed in the present study. Rather, one of the purposes of the survey was to discover the various conceptions of giftedness that presently are being utilized to direct the development of programs in Connecticut.

—Educational Technology

Extent of Special Programming

Figure 1 shows that 42 percent of the school districts responding to the questionnaire have programs of differential education for the gifted. If the assumption is made that the incidence of superior mental ability in the school population occurs at least as frequently as mental retardation, then an interesting analysis can be made of the data in Figure 1.

By comparing the proportion of programs for the gifted with the proportion of programs for the mentally retarded, it is safe to assume that only a "moderate" number of school districts are giving equal attention to exceptional students at *both* ends of the ability continuum.



1. Programs for the Gifted Compared With Special Programs in Other Areas

An indication of the extent of special programming can be approximated by determining the actual number of students who have been identified as gifted. It seems reasonable to assume that unless a school can point to a clearly identified population of students with superior behavioral potential in given areas, it is quite likely that little if anything exists at the level of practice that truly can be called differential education for the gifted.
In other words, in order to provide maximally for gifted students, it is highly desirable that systematic identification procedures be carried out prior to the implementation of special programming.

Table 1 shows the number of students who have been identified through systematic methods and the number who are enrolled in special programs. Twelve percent of the districts reporting programs for the gifted did not respond to that part of the questionnaire seeking information on the number of students identified and enrolled.

Table 1—No. of Students Identified as Gifted Compared With Number Enrolled in Special Programs

	Identified	*Enrolled*	*Percent of Identified That Are Enrolled*
Elementary	2885	1569	54
Secondary	2835	2202	78
TOTAL	5720	3771	66

Although more and more schools are attempting to make special provisions for all areas of exceptionality, a systematic and sustained effort on the part of administrators and other leadership personnel is clearly needed if programs for the gifted are to catch up and keep pace with developments in other areas.

Recent events at the state and national levels are encouraging in this regard. Several states currently have legislature provisions for the special education of the gifted and a number of programs have been initiated under the various titles of the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Types of Programs . . . Elementary

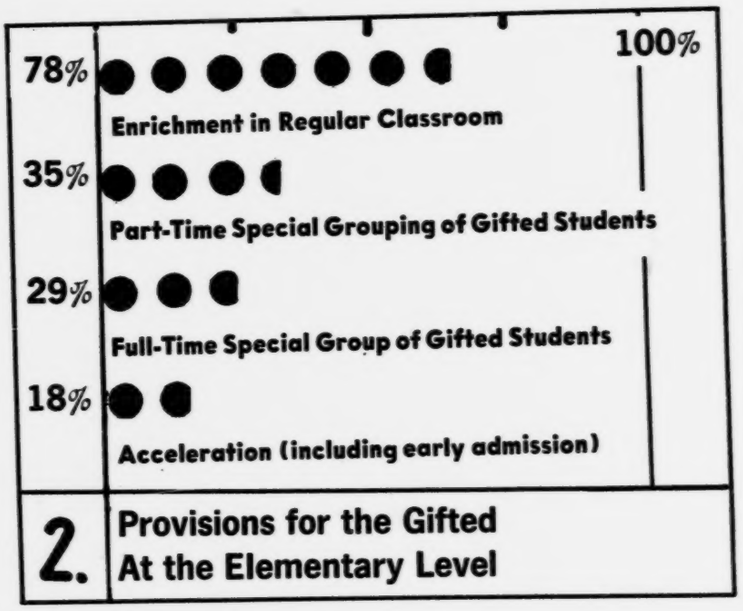
Comprehensive programming for the gifted requires the use of a variety of special provisions or practices. In the elementary school these provisions usually fall into one or more of three general categories: grouping, acceleration, and enrichment. There are, of course, many variations that hold different degrees of potential for improving the educational experience of gifted youngsters. And it is clear that no one practice singly applied to a selected grade of subject matter area can be said to constitute a *program* for the gifted.

Although a small number of school districts reported multidimensional approaches to the education of superior students, the vast majority of responses to the questionnaire indicated that most schools are attempting to meet the needs of their gifted elementary students through the use of a single practice.

Figure 2 shows that enrichment in the regular classroom is by far the most popular practice at the elementary level. In addition to the provisions reported in Figure 2, a small number of respondents indicated that their more able elementary students were being provided for through such means as summer programs, after school and Saturday programs, and ungraded primary classes. The most fre-

quently reported means of enrichment were individual projects, clubs and special interest groups, and field trips. Less frequently reported practices included special instruction for the gifted in art, music, foreign languages, creative writing, and dramatics.

Sixty-nine percent of the total number of school districts responding to the inquiry indicated that some form of ability grouping was employed at the elementary level. This percentage includes schools that have part-time and full-time classes for the gifted, as well as those that gener-



2. Provisions for the Gifted At the Elementary Level

ally group their students but do not have a specially identified gifted group. Table 2 summarizes the grade levels at which homogeneous grouping is begun:

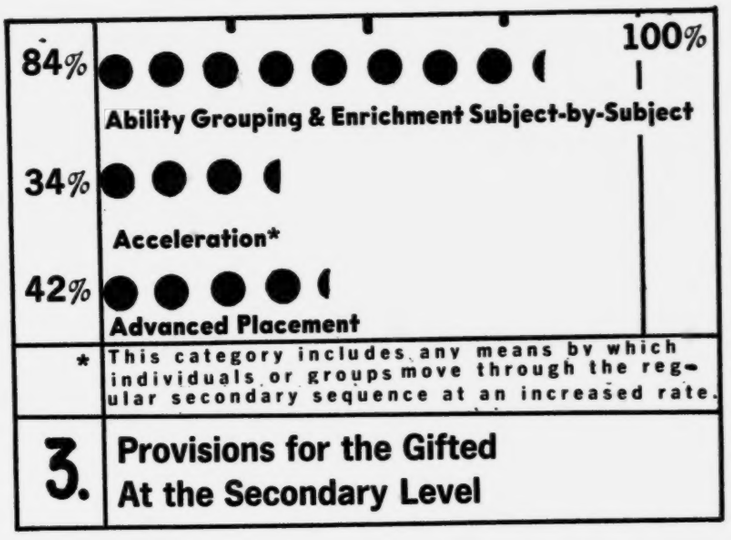
Table 2—Grade Level at which Homogeneous Grouping Is Begun

Grade	*Number Beginning at This Grade*	*Percent*
1	23	27
2	10	12
3	7	8
4	26	31
5	9	11
6	8	10
7	1	1
Total	84	100

Types of Programs . . . Secondary

School districts were requested to indicate the type and extent of provisions made for gifted students at the junior and senior high school levels. Generally, a greater variety of provisions was reported at these levels than in the elementary grades. This, no doubt, is due to the greater flexibility of scheduling that can be accomplished by the secondary schools.

Specific provisions falling within the three main categories indicated in Figure 3 include: special seminars and laboratories in selected curricular areas, alternate grade placement of subjects, and honor's sections.


84%
100%
Ability Grouping & Enrichment Subject-by-Subject
34%
Acceleration*
42%
Advanced Placement
* This category includes any means by which individuals or groups move through the regular secondary sequence at an increased rate.

3. Provisions for the Gifted At the Secondary Level

A small number of schools reported after-school and Saturday enrichment programs, and summer programs leading to acceleration through the regular school sequence. Two schools reported programs of independent study by which students could earn credit without attending class. One high school has worked out an arrangement whereby

their high achieving juniors and seniors can take courses at a nearby college.

Forty-two percent of the total number of school districts responding to the questionnaire indicated that they are participating in varying degrees in the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board, and the University of Connecticut Cooperative Program.

Through this program, capable students can earn advanced standing or college credit during their senior year in high school. The frequency of participation in the Advanced Placement Program according to subject matter is shown in Table 3.

Table 3—Number and Percent of Advanced Placement Offerings According to Subject Matter Area

Subject	*No. of High Schools Offering A.P. in this Subject*	*Percent of High Schools Offering A.P. in this Subject*
Mathematics	33	25
Sciences*	32	24
English	27	21
Foreign Language	13	10
Social Studies	12	9

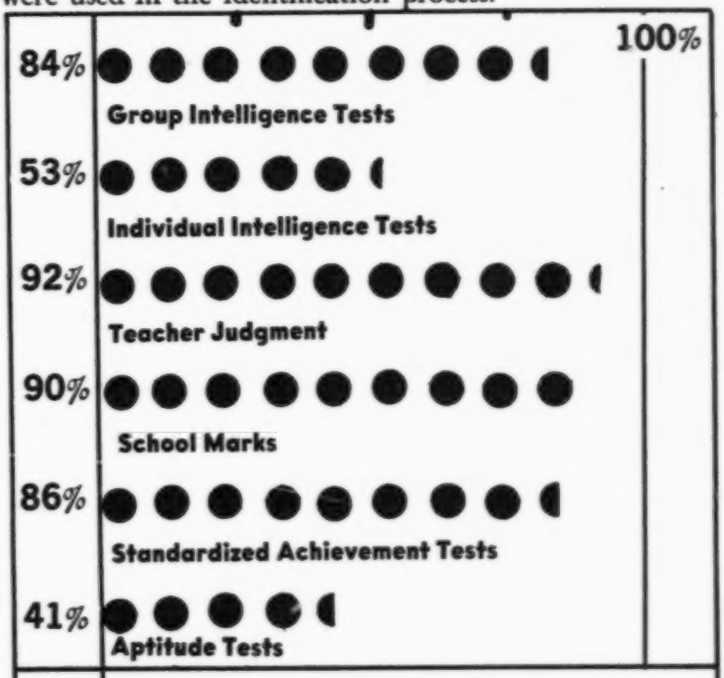
*Biology, physics, and chemistry

Identification Procedures

The type of educational program that a school system provides for its gifted youngsters ususally is related to the school's conception of giftedness. In a similar fashion, the conception of giftedness also determines to a certain extent the criteria by which program participants will be identified.

The process of selecting gifted students for special programs often takes a variety of forms. But most authorities agree that a well-planned and comprehensive program of pupil identification should embrace a number of criteria, both objective and subjective.

Figure 4 shows the frequency with which various criteria were used in the identification process.



4. Criteria Used for Identifying Gifted Students

As is indicated in Figure 5, the vast majority of school systems that responded to the survey used a composite of at least three criteria in the task of identifying gifted pupils. In 86 percent of the cases, four or more criteria were used.

The composite of intelligence test scores, school marks, teacher opinion, and achievement test scores was by far the most frequently reported combination.

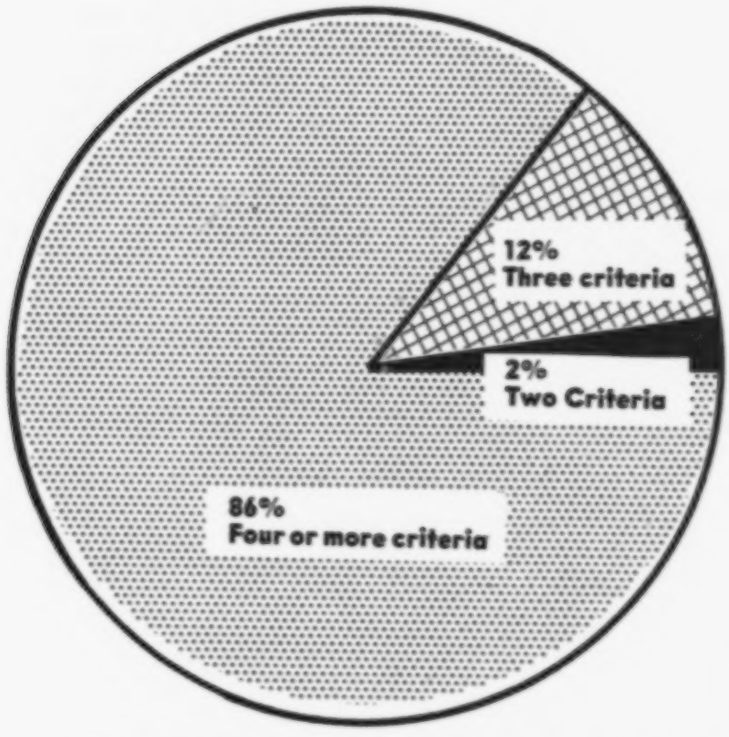


FIGURE 5-Number of Criteria Used In Identifying Gifted Students

(In this figure, individual and group intelligence tests are considered as a single criterion.)

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated that group and/or individual intelligence tests were used as part of the identification process. The Stanford-Binet and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children were used almost exclusively for individual assessment.

The most frequently used group intelligence tests were the Otis Series, the Lorge-Thorndike, and the California Test of Mental Maturity. In several instances, the use of more than one intelligence test was reported.

The standardized achievement tests most frequently mentioned were the Iowa, the Metropolitan, and the Stanford. The only aptitude test reported with any degree of frequency was the Differential Aptitude Test. A few schools

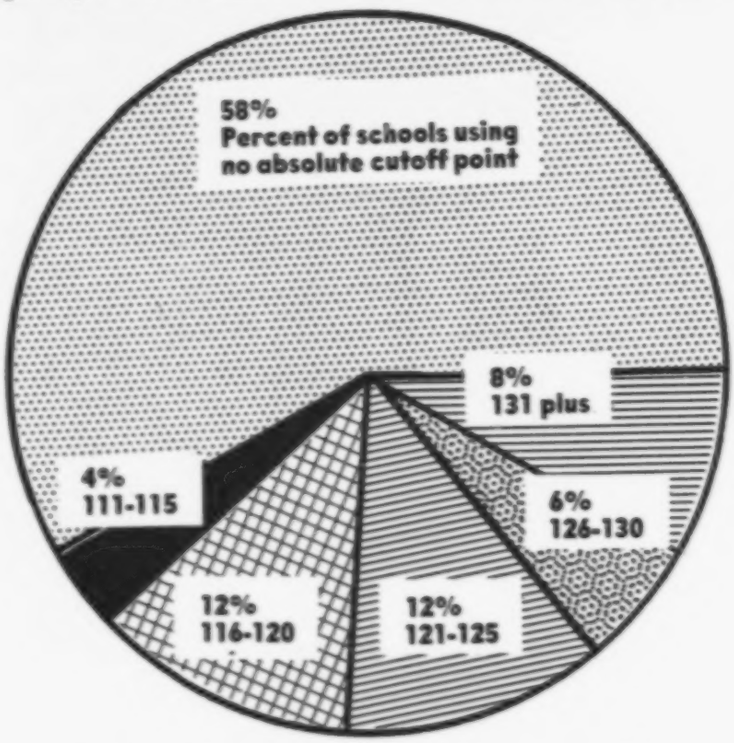


FIGURE 6-Cutoff on IQ Scores Used In Identifying Students as Gifted

reported the use of interest inventories and tests of creativity as part of the identification process.

Figure 6 shows the minimum I.Q. scores that were used in classifying pupils as gifted. Although most school systems use some form of intelligence measurement as one of the criteria for identifying gifted students, 58 percent of the respondents indicated that no absolute cutoff score was established for selecting program participants.

School systems that reported "no absolute cutoff point" tended more often than the others to make use of both individual and group I.Q. scores. Several of the schools falling into this category reported that students who scored within "certain ranges" on group measures were then evaluated on the basis of an individual test and other criteria.

As is indicated above, many school systems employed more than one intelligence test. The fact that I.Q.'s derived from different instruments are not strictly comparable probably accounts for some of the responses in this category.

--Responsive Environments

Teacher Selection and Staff Training

Perhaps the most crucial single element in a program of differential education for the gifted is the teacher. The selection of persons who will guide and direct the learning experiences of highly endowed youth should be approached with at least as much care and judgment as is given to choosing the students who will participate in special programs.

The results of this survey indicate that 18 percent of the school districts responding to the inquiry use special criteria for selecting the teachers that work with their superior students. This relatively small percentage is probably due, in part, to the fact that "enrichment in the regular classroom" is the most prevalent means presently being employed to meet the needs of the gifted.

The survey indicated that only six percent of the responding school systems provided orientation or in-service training programs for their teachers of the gifted. The considered selection of teachers for the gifted should be paralleled by a systematic orientation program that is designed to acquaint the entire staff with various aspects of the psychology and education of the gifted.

A sympathetic attitude toward special provisions for the gifted and a basic understanding of the theory and operation of differential programming on the part of *all* staff members are considered to be important elements in helping to realize a school's maximum effectiveness in this area. In most instances, staff members not connected with the gifted student program per se usually participate indirectly by identifying and recommending students for placement.

Administrative Responsibility

A clear designation of administrative responsibility is an essential condition for the most efficient operation of any school program. Although the size and resources of a school system will determine the amount of administrative time that can be allocated to the gifted student program, it is necessary that the person in charge of even the smallest program be given sufficient time and resources to carry out his administrative duties in this area.

Already overburdened administrators, supervisors, or teachers — who are given the responsibility of a special program as an "extra" assignment without a corresponding reduction of other duties — are likely to approach the task with less than optimal enthusiasm.

Table 4 summarizes the positions of the persons who are delegated the responsibility for coordinating the gifted student programs in their districts.

Table 4—Persons Administratively Responsible for Gifted Student Programs

Position	*Number*	*Percent*
Principal	13	25
Superintendent	10	19
Supervisor of Instruction	7	14
Guidance Director	6	12
Assistant Superintendent	5	10
Guidance Counselor	2	4
School Psychologist	2	4
Not Reported	6	12
TOTAL	51	100

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to survey various aspects of programs for the gifted in the state of Connecticut. The findings are restricted to the school districts responding to the inquiry and to the usual limitations that are inherent in general questionnaire surveys.

The results of the survey seem to warrant the following conclusions:

1—Although several school districts are making provisions for their more able students, a majority of the respondents reported no special programs in this area — thus, the need for concentrated and systematic efforts to develop new programs is clearly indicated.

2—Existing programs for the gifted represent varying degrees of comprehensiveness. At the present time, only a small number of schools districts have programs that attempt to provide differential qualities of experience for all gifted students at all grade levels and in all curricular areas. Total programming for the gifted is still the rare exception, and although commendable but limited practices can be found scattered throughout several localities, there is a great need for an extension of these practices within the districts that have already recognized their obligation to the gifted student.

3—Most of the school districts reported the use of a number of criteria in identifying gifted students and the identification process appears to be a fairly well-developed feature of many of the programs currently in operation.

4—There has been very little effort on the part of most school districts to select teachers for the gifted on the basis of explicitly stated criteria.

5—A great deal needs to be done in the area of in-service education, so that all teachers may develop a better understanding of giftedness and of the special programming that is possible for the superior student.

Several questions still remain unanswered. The following are some of the questions that are deserving of further study:

1—To what extent are the curricular experiences of the gifted student distinguishably different from the experiences of all students?

2—How do the philosophy and objectives of programs for the gifted differ from those of the regular program?

3—To what extent and by what means have school systems attempted to evaluate their programs for the gifted?

4—To what extent are students who have been identified as gifted purposefully placed in different studies or activity groups according to their specific aptitudes and interests?

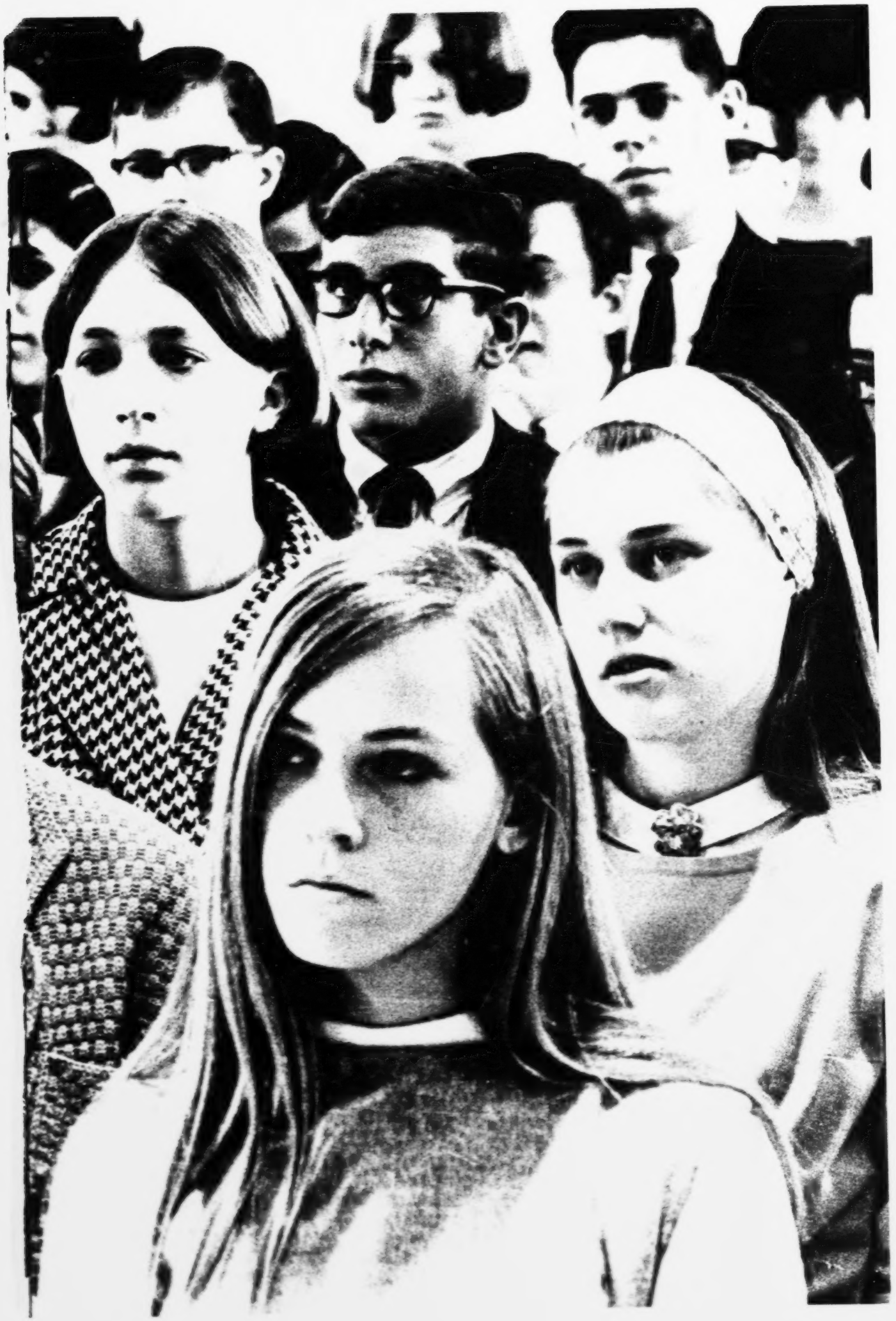
5—Are school systems that employ enrichment in the regular classrooms as the main method of meeting the needs of gifted youth approaching the task through systematic and clearly recognizable practices?

6—Does the overall program for the gifted show functional and structural relationships among the special offerings from subject to subject and from year to year?

7—Are there provisions for special instructional facilities, materials, and supplies that are uniquely suited to the development of recognizably superior abilities?

8—What are the qualifications of persons who are administratively responsible for special programs for the gifted? What proportion of their time actually is spent in this area?

The above questions reflect some of the more general and pervasive issues that were raised as a result of the present survey. They may be used as starting points for future studies, or as challenges by school personnel who are concerned with developing or improving programs for students who have a superior potential for making remarkable contributions to society.



Suppose that Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Martin Luther, William Harvey, Oliver Cromwell, Nicholas Copernicus, Andrew Jackson, and Michael Faraday were all students in your local high school this year! If your high school is of average size . . . and your community of average intelligence, as far as native endowment is concerned, that probably is actually the case every year.

—Ernest M. Ligon

A Greater Generation